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ABSTRACT

Research and practice have shown that staff development is the key to the successful implementation of any effective schools project. Staff development is defined as the ongoing, job-related, research-based activity provided for employees to maintain and improve their competencies. Part 1 of this paper outlines components (such as district-level support, adequate time, and followup activities) needed for successful staff development programs and describes the design of two such programs implemented in the Spencerport (New York) More Effective Schools/Teaching Project. The Teacher Expectations and Student Achievement program taught teachers to distribute 15 specific supportive and motivating behaviors equitably among students. The Essential Elements of Effective Instruction program assisted teachers in translating learning theories into teaching practices. Part 2 of the paper describes a plan for teaching key leaders throughout the district about the effective schools research implications and possibilities and for developing and implementing a master plan. The process involves (1) creating general awareness, knowledge, and understanding; (2) developing district-wide and building planning teams; (3) conducting a needs assessment; and (4) involving all faculty in the selection of school improvement teams. (IW)

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STAFF DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS OF AN EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS PROJECT

by

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After a school commences an effective schools project teachers begin to ask "What does this project mean to me?" "What can I do in the classroom to achieve the project's goals?"

Sometimes they phrase their questions in terms of the correlates which describe an effective school where all children learn. Teachers ask:

- If high expectations for success of all students is a goal, what can I do in the classroom to achieve this?
- If instructional leadership is a characteristic of an effective school, how can I be more of an instructional leader in the classroom?
- If clear school mission is a goal, how can I have a clearly stated focus in my classroom?
- If frequent monitoring of student progress is a correlate of an effective school, how can I more effectively diagnose students and evaluate curriculum?

Classroom teachers wonder how to translate the effective schools research into practice. The answer to their question is a staff development program based upon the effective teaching research. Edmonds commented that the findings of both the effective schools research and the effective teaching research "emphasize behaviors within the school as the major determinants

of achievement in basic school skills. Both groups of researchers depend on the discovery of effective practice in contrast to invention of recommended practice based on theory to improve achievement. Furthermore, the correlates of effective schools and effective classrooms derive exclusively from the environment over which local schools have control (Edmonds, 1982, p. 19)."

Staff development is the "how to" of an effective schools project. It gives teachers a research foundation upon which to base their instructional decisions so that more effective teaching will occur. Effective teaching research shows teachers how to behave to cause learning. This information can be used so that learning will be more predictably and consistently acquired. When teachers teach more systematically, student achievement improves and often there is also an improvement in student attitudes.

Staff development is a strategy, not an event or a series of events, which needs to exist to enable teachers to become more proficient in the classroom. Each teacher comes to a staff development workshop with different teaching skills and strategies. The program encourages teachers to examine their own skills, to take time to strengthen and reinforce the ones which are effective and to enlarge their repertoire of effective teaching practices.

Staff development is the on-going, job-related, research based activity provided for employees to maintain their competencies. It is not remedial in nature. It is designed to maintain and improve staff proficiency.

This type of program differs from the all too common one-shot in-service days which often are of the "listen and then go back and do as I say" design. Oftentimes teachers attend these sessions with little idea of how or where it fits into their classroom, building or district. These in-service sessions typically are short, not necessarily job-related and do not contain a follow-up component.

In order for a staff development program based upon the effective teaching research to be effective and have a sustained impact on teachers and students, certain components need to be in place. They are:

- Job related content which is useful to the employee. The content must be oriented to answering the question "What can I do to increase student achievement?"
- The program must be planned and coordinated. Evidence of this guideline can be obtained from answers to questions such as:
  - Are there objectives for the program?
  - Where does it fit into the districts' goals?

- Is participation mandatory or voluntary?

- District level support is essential. Money needs to be placed in the budget annually to secure the services of consultants, to support various programs and workshops and to send people to various conferences and training programs. Even more important than money is continued positive publicity from those in power such as the Board of Education, the Superintendent and his or her central office staff, and, indeed, the teacher's union! All groups, both formal and informal, should work together to have a successful staff development program.

- Is time provided for a program to develop and then prove its effectiveness? Too often we in America seek the "quick fix"! Yet people can not be rushed through personal change. We can not reasonably expect classroom teachers to learn new (or slightly different) techniques and to assimilate them successfully into their daily teaching repertoire in a month or two. We can not expect experienced teachers and administrators to "look different" in one year.

- Is there a follow-up component? If there is none, then the staff development program might as well be cancelled! Joyce's research shows that transfer of training from an

inservice program into the classroom is directly related to the types of methods used during and after the workshop. Follow-up occurs when teachers practice in the classroom and receive both feedback and coaching on their efforts to learn a new technique and to incorporate it into their normal classroom behavior (Joyce).

Spencerport's More Effective Schools/Teaching Project selected two staff development programs to introduce the findings of the effective teaching research. They were selected because they met all of the criteria for a successful staff development program. The programs selected were Teacher Expectations and Student Achievement (TESA) and the Essential Elements of Effective Instruction.

During a six session, once a month program participants in TESA are taught to distribute fifteen specific supportive and motivating behaviors equitably among the students in a class. TESA helps to make teachers aware of their unconscious discriminatory interactions between their perceived high achievers and their perceived low achievers. The rationale for TESA is that teachers can directly affect the quantity and quality of students learning by the expectations they hold for pupil performance and how they manifest these expectations.

TESA's process is:

- At the commencement of the program teachers select from one of their classes five pupils whom they consider to be high achievers and five pupils whom they consider to be low achievers. These are the "target students" whose interactions with the teacher will be objectively observed throughout the workshop.
- Once a month the teachers meet and are taught three new behaviors. They learn the research background for the behaviors and have the opportunity either to practice them or to observe and practice recording the behaviors. These workshops are held in a good local hotel from 4:00 to 8:00 p.m. An excellent dinner, paid for by the district, is served. Teachers enjoy and appreciate being treated like executives!
- During the month between sessions each teacher practices the behaviors taught and is observed by four others in his or her group. The observers fill in a frequency chart which records the teachers' distribution of behaviors among students for whom he or she has high or low expectations. This observation and the chart remain confidential between the observer and the teacher.

The improvement in student attitudes and subsequent "tuning in" of low achievers is only one result of TESA. Another and equally powerful result is the peer observation which occurs. Teachers are grouped across grade levels, across departments and across buildings. The impact of this peer observation is:

- Teachers become used to receiving feedback from peers. (Typically they are uneasy about this at the beginning, but they cite it as a highlight at the end.)
- Teachers develop collegial, not just congenial, relationships with one another.
- Teachers come to see and appreciate (often for the first time) the high quality of teaching and the complexity of the instructional program at other levels of the school system. For most high school teachers this program provides the first opportunity to be in an elementary classroom since they left the sixth grade and vice versa.

Finally it should be noted that in 1974 TESA was named as one of the most outstanding of the 1,800 Title IV-C projects in the nation (Kerman). Further, it is one of the most successful staff development programs distributed by Phi Delta Kappa. Spencerport's experience confirms its reputation!

Basically TESA's fifteen behaviors focus on the affective dimension of the teaching - learning process. The second program which Spencerport's More Effective Schools/Teaching Project chose addresses the instructional skills of the teacher in relationship to what we know about how people learn.

The Essential Elements of Effective Instruction program is based on the Madeline Hunter model of the teacher as decision-maker. The program is an intensive five day workshop for teachers and an intensive eleven day workshop for principals and supervisors. The administrators' workshop includes six days devoted to a model of Clinical Supervision which may be used to assist teachers in implementing various components of the Elements of Instruction.

The Elements of Instruction workshop reinforces and strengthens skills which teachers intuitively know are effective by giving them the research based rationale for their behavior. It also emphasizes research regarding how children learn and translates this research into teaching practices. Extensive time is provided to practice the skills taught.

These workshops are held during the school day from 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. For those who prefer not to leave their classes, workshops are held during the summer and teachers receive pay for

attending them. Once again, teachers enjoy and appreciate being treated like executives! It is common practice for major corporations to send key executives, on company time, to workshops or courses designed either to maintain or improve their skills or to learn new skills.

After the five day Essential Elements of Effective Instruction workshop teachers may, at their choice, participate in building review sessions, peer coaching sessions or clinical supervision sessions with their principal. These options comprise the follow-up aspects of Spencerport's program.

As long as the primary purpose of schooling is teaching and learning, the quality of teaching is and always will be a school's single most potent educational resource. A staff development component to an effective schools project strengthens and increases the effectiveness of a school's most powerful resource.

II

Another staff development implication of an effective schools project, in addition to the effective teaching element, is the need to teach key leaders throughout the district about the effective schools research, its implications and its

possibilities. Usually when an effective schools project begins in a building or a district only a few people know this information.

Awareness is the first state of this instructional process. Usually it is created by circulating key articles such as Edmonds' "Effective Schools for the Urban Poor" (Edmonds, 1979), by showing introductory videotapes such as ASCD's "Teacher and School Effectiveness" (Teacher and School Effectiveness) and by briefly discussing the research during regularly scheduled meetings of the faculty, the Administrative Council, the Curriculum Council, the Board of Education and other groups.

Knowledge and understanding is the objective of the second stage of the instructional process. Usually this is achieved by having a consultant conduct a two or three day inservice program for a district-wide leadership plannning team. These inservice sessions are characterized by formal presentations on the reasons for, the methodology of, the findings of and the implications of effective schools research. Significant literature is distributed. Opportunities for audience participation and discussion are provided.

Frequently some or all members of the district-wide leadership planning team supplement their training by attending one of the effective schools workshops held throughout the nation.

Application occurs when the district-wide leadership planning team develops a written master plan which is an operational statement of the research's implications and its application to the specific school system --- or building, should only one or two buildings in a district be embarking upon an effective schools project.

After the master plan has been developed and approved by the Superintendent of Schools and the Board of Education, the leadership planning team usually conducts an initial needs assessment. One phase of the assessment determines the degree to which the correlates that characterize schools where all children learn are present in each participating building. The other phase of the needs assessment determines whether <u>all</u> children are learning equally, at least to the point of minimum academic mastery. Minimum academic mastery is the attainment of a score on a standardized test (preferably criterion referenced, otherwise norm referenced) which indicates that the child will be demonstrably and predictably successful at the next level the following year.

An extensive amount of data is gathered during the needs assessment. Consequently, members of the district-wide leadership planning team and of the building level school improvement teams, which have been formed in each participating school, need to be taught how to interpret the data and how to build a plan of improvement for their building based upon the data. This workshop takes from three to five full days depending upon the dynamics of the group. Usually it is held on released time during the school day. Sometimes the team is taken to and resides at a nearby hotel. Sometimes the workshop occurs during the summer. Upon completion of it, the participants will have enough knowledge of the process so that they will be able to conduct needs assessments in subsequent years, to interpret the data gathered and to develop building plans based upon the data.

Building school improvement teams also need to be trained in small group process skills. Teacher training programs normally do not include small group skills such as agenda sharing, facilitation, conflict resolution, and consensus building. School improvement teams which have had this experience function more efficiently and effectively than do teams which work solely from the basis of congenial (and, sadly, sometimes not so congenial!) relationships developed over the years.

At about the same time that the building level school improvement teams are formed, usually after the development and approval of the master plan, the awareness phase of an effective schools project needs to be revisited. This time the audience is the total faculty. The objective is to provide them with more knowledge about the research and its implications. The faculty needs this knowledge to select key, respected colleagues to serve on the school improvement team. Further, when the team presents its draft school improvement plan to the faculty for approval, the faculty should discuss the plan using its knowledge of the effective schools research and its implications.

The total process outlined in the development phase of an effective schools project requires approximately ten full days. There are several key characteristics which distinguish a school improvement project based upon the effective schools research from a generalized school improvement project (Sudlow). If the inservice training program described above either is not held or is extensively shortened, then in all probability the school district, or the building, will conduct a generalized school improvement project --- not an effective schools project. There is nothing wrong with and there is much that is commendable about a generalized school improvement project. An effective schools

project, however, is a new and powerful, research based, comprehensive construct to cause schools to improve. As professionals we should seriously consider and use new knowledge as it becomes available. The staff development program for the district leadership planning team and for the school improvement teams as well as the awareness program for their colleagues enables us to utilize this significant new research.

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